



# Spotlight

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A Quarterly Newsletter of the Dorchester County Department of Social Services

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## Dorchester Social Services Achieves Reaccreditation

The Dorchester County Department of Social Services has again met the standards for accreditation by the Council on Accreditation of Services to Families and Children (COA). "I want to congratulate staff for their hard work and tremendous dedication to reach these national, best practice standards," said Bill McDonnell, Director.

COA is an international, independent, not-for-profit, child- and family-service and behavioral healthcare accrediting organization. It was founded in 1977 by the Child Welfare League of America and Family Service America (now the Alliance for Children and Families). Originally known as an accrediting body for family and children's agencies, COA currently accredits 38 different service areas and over 60 types of programs. Among the service areas are substance abuse treatment, adult day care, services for the homeless, foster care, and inter-country adoption. The COA is an international, independent, not-for-profit accrediting body that accredits behavioral health care and social service programs. Its rigorous accrediting process reviews all aspects of an organization and evaluates them based on national standards of best practices.

A panel of reviewers from a variety of Human Services Agencies representing COA found the Department to be in

compliance with each of the major categories for the over 800 standards with which an agency must comply to be accredited. The local offices had to meet service standards in adoption services, foster and kinship care services, child protection services and family-centered casework as well as organization and management standards in general areas such as ethical practice, continuous quality improvement, financial management, behavioral management and organizational integrity.

Thirteen (13) of the twenty-four (24) departments of Social Services are now accredited with the goal of all 24 and the DHR Central Office being accredited. Department of Human Resources Secretary Brenda Donald said, "Each local jurisdiction will go through a similar process of strengthening their practices; the goal is for the entire Department including the central office to be accredited. Accreditation provides a benchmark for us to measure how we are doing in several areas. It makes us stronger, and enhances our capability to meet the incredible demands placed on the child welfare and adult services system as we work with our partners to protect Maryland's adults and children."

The accreditation is for a period of 4 years. Dorchester was initially accredited in 2002.



### Jewel Camper Selected Dorchester DSS Social Worker of the Year

Jewel Camper began her career at Dorchester Social Services in January 2006, as an Adult Services Social Worker in the Senior Care Program. She brought a solid background in county based family services to the program.

Jewel was treated to a luncheon at the historic Belvedere hotel in Baltimore City, as one of 24 Social Workers identified by her peers. The event was hosted by Secretary Brenda Donald and sponsored by the University of Maryland School of Social Work and the Baltimore City Commission on Social Work. First Lady Katie O'Malley was the special guest. Profiles of all 24 are available in the most recent issue of Front and Central, at <http://dhrnet.dhr/pr/fcnews/>

index.html.

Kathleen Rineholt, Supervisor of the Senior Care Program, stated, "From the beginning it was evident that she was soundly committed to her new job managing a caseload that had been vacated for five months." Clients called and sent notes expressing their gratitude for the way she performed her duties. They said she often exceeded expectations to insure their welfare.

Supervisor Rineholt also praised her quiet dignity. She never spoke about her successes. When discussing problems she proposed solutions. Jewel also displayed leadership qualities. She organized holiday outreach support for customers during Thanksgiving and Christmas. She leads the Senior Council meetings when her supervisor is unavailable. She assists with billing issues, when needed.

Jewel is also an eager volunteer for agency committees. She actively participates on the Best Practices Team, which tries to find better ways of doing business at Social Services.

The most important quality about Jewel is the attitude she brings with her to the office. Her smile is an asset that creates a positive climate wherever she goes. Coworkers smile all the time when Jewel is around. She is a pleasure to work with, and treats others with respect.

### **New Foster Parent Associations on Mid-Shore Support Foster Parents**

Three recently established associations hope to help improve care for Mid-Shore foster children in need through advocacy, recruitment, and support of foster parents.

Magalene Molock of Cambridge, and Cheryl Krebeck of Easton, recently launched the Dorchester and Talbot County Foster Parent Association to meet the needs of foster parents beyond State-provided assistance and training.

"Through our association, foster parents can come together and talk about our successes and our challenges," said Molock. "Particularly for newer foster parents, what better assistance and advice can you get than from another foster parent who has already been doing it. Some foster parents have more than 20 years experience."

Krebeck, who is a member of the Eastern Shore Task Force on Foster Care, has seen the value of strong foster parent associations. "These associations give us more of a voice in talking to legislators, social services staff, or even the governor, about what can make foster parenting stronger and attract more people to foster parenting," she said.

Eighteen foster families attended the Dorchester-Talbot association's first meeting in February. Others are to be held monthly on the fourth Wednesday.

In addition, the association acts as an important resource for helping foster families access resources that are available locally said President Bonnie Shuler of Preston.

"We're even looking to set up a website where foster parents can learn about resources that we can all share instead of having to go out and buy everything all the time," she said. "For example, if a family unexpectedly needs a crib for a young child, instead of having to go out and buy one there may be another foster family that has one available."

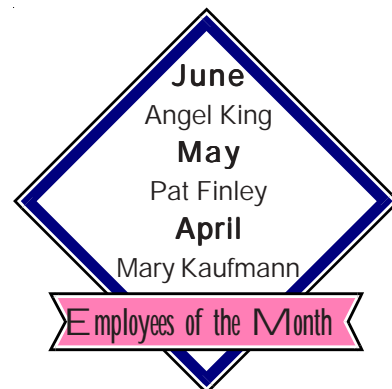
"An added benefit of the associations may be more local or

regional opportunities for training programs and seminars," said Helen Nicholson of Worton, president of the Kent County association launched in July 2007. The Kent County association meets every three months and has six members.

"Right now, we all have to travel to Baltimore or elsewhere on the Western Shore for many of these programs," she said. "Our hope is that we can organize some opportunities for in-service training right here on the Shore, which would allow more of our parents to attend."

In addition to attracting existing foster families, the associations in each county hope to draw people who are thinking about becoming foster parents and want to learn more in a no-pressure environment.

More information about the associations is available by contacting them directly. For Dorchester and Talbot counties, call Molock at 410-228-2396 or Krebeck at 410-822-4447.



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